



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Pakistan

Pakistan – PAK39526 – Pakistani Army –
Targeting of family members by militants

9 January 2012

1. What evidence is there of individuals who are family members of members of the Pakistani army being targeted for harm by fundamentalist militant groups throughout Pakistan?

Limited information was located regarding fundamentalist militant groups in Pakistan specifically targeting individuals who are family members of members of the Pakistani army. Information was located regarding relatives of security forces more broadly, including those of police as well as government officials, being subject to harm by Pakistani militants. The families of such individuals have also been subject to harm indirectly, rather than being specifically targeted.

In 2007, an article at the Long War Journal website noted that a series of attacks targeting military and intelligence agencies had taken place in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Sargodha and Punjab between August and December 2007. According to the article, “[t]he spate of attacks at military bases has largely targeted officers, new recruits, and the families of those serving”.¹ In September 2011, *The Nation* reported that “various Taliban and al-Qaeda splinter groups” were increasingly seeking to target the political elite in large cities by using female suicide bombers. The claim followed a series of attacks by militants “targeting the personnel of security force [sic] and even their families in Quetta and Karachi”. *The Nation* noted that prior to this attack, “terrorists targeted a bakery and hotel frequented by military officers and their families” in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North-West Frontier Province).²

In December 2009, suspected-Taliban militants attacked a mosque in Rawalpindi, “shooting randomly, killing worshippers at close range and exploding bombs in a frenzied attack that killed at least 40 people”.³ The mosque was known to be frequented by former high-ranking military officers and their families. According to Professor Juan Cole, “[b]y striking at a military residential area, they knew they were targeting military dependents and retirees, the most vulnerable members of the military community”.⁴

¹ ‘Al Qaeda, Taliban targeting Pakistani nuclear sites’ 2007, Long War Journal website, 11 December http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/12/al_qaeda_taliban_tar.php – Accessed 20 December 2011 (*The Long War Journal is a non-profit news/blog site and a publication of the neoconservative think-tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies*)

² ‘Female bombers out to target political elite’ 2011, *The Nation*, 21 September <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Lahore/21-Sep-2011/Female-bombers-out-to-target-political-elite> – Accessed 20 December 2011

³ ‘Pakistan militants launch deadly attack on Rawalpindi mosque’ 2009, *The Guardian*, 4 December <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/04/militants-attack-rawalpindi-mosque-pakistan> – Accessed 21 December 2011

⁴ ‘Two Extremists Attack Rawalpindi Mosque, Kill 40, wound Nearly 100’ 2009, Professor Juan Cole blog, 5 December <http://www.juancole.com/2009/12/two-extremists-attack-rawalpindi-mosque.html> – Accessed 21

In addition to the targeting of the families of army personnel, police officers and their families are also at risk of harm from militant attacks. According to *The Express Tribune*, on 19 September 2011 militants targeted the home of Karachi's Superintendent of Police Crime Investigation Department Chaudhry Aslam Khan, located within the Defence Housing Authority Phase III. Although Khan and his family were not injured, eight people, including police guards, a cook, a schoolteacher and her son, were killed in the explosion.⁵ According to *CNN*, in September 2011 the wife of Brigadier Farrukh Shehzad, a senior Pakistani Frontier Corps paramilitary officer, was killed when two suicide bombers targeted Shehzad's home in Quetta. A senior Quetta police official noted that Shehzad's children had left for school before the incident. Though the Tehrik-e-Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, a spokesman reportedly expressed regret at the death of Shehzad's wife, saying that "the attacks were retaliation for Shehzad's involvement in an operation against the group on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border last year".⁶

In January 2011, militants reportedly "raided the house of a female police constable in Hangu District...killing her and seven family members". The attack took place at 3:30am, when militants fired a rocket at the house, before entering and opening fire on the residents. The officer, her daughter, two sisters-in-law, two sons and their wives were reportedly killed in the attack.⁷ According to *The Guardian*, in September 2010 a car bomb exploded in the residential area of a police compound in Peshawar, killing 14 women and children and four police officers, and wounding 94 others. The compound reportedly houses police officers' homes, a training facility and a commercial area.⁸

Family members of politicians have also been attacked by militants in Pakistan. In February 2011, the South Asia Terrorism Portal website reported that three family members of Federal Government official Zeenat Shah were injured when their car was ambushed on the Kohat-Hangu highway.⁹ According to *CBS News*, the son of an anti-Taliban Pakistani politician was killed in July 2010 by suspected Taliban gunmen. Mian Rashid Hussain, the son of Mian Iftikhar Hussain, the provincial information minister of Khyber-Pashtunkhwa province, was reportedly killed while walking with his cousin. According to a *CBS News* intelligence source, "in the future Taliban militants could attack family members of other prominent public figures in a bid to unnerve key members of Pakistan's ruling structure". This view was supported by a senior western diplomat in Islamabad, who "warned that the attack could be followed by more attempts to target close family members of Pakistan's ruling elite".¹⁰

December 2011 (*Juan Cole is a Professor of History at the University of Michigan, and a noted expert on the Middle East and South Asia*)

⁵ 'Taliban hit list: Battleground shifts from headquarters to home' 2011, *The Express Tribune*, 19 September <http://tribune.com.pk/story/255507/blast-in-karachi-targets-ssp-cid/> – Accessed 21 December 2011

⁶ 'Bombers target home of Pakistani paramilitary official, kill 23' 2011, *CNN*, 7 September http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-07/world/pakistan.explosion_1_security-forces-suicide-bombers-senior-quetta-police?s=PM:WORLD – Accessed 20 December 2011

⁷ 'Female police officer and her family shot dead in Hangu-Pakistan' 2011, *All Voices*, 14 January <http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/7886345-gunmen-kill-female-police-officer-her-7-family-members-in-pakistan> – Accessed 20 December 2011

⁸ 'Pakistan police families targeted in suicide car bomb attack' 2010, *The Guardian*, source: *Associated Press*, 8 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/08/pakistan-police-families-car-bomb> – Accessed 20 December 2011

⁹ 'Three injured in attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' 2011, South Asia Terrorism Portal website, 7 February http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=2/7/2011&id=3#3 – Accessed 21 December 2011 (*The South Asia Terrorism Portal is maintained by the Institute for Conflict Management, a New Delhi-based private think-tank*)

¹⁰ 'Official: Taliban Behind Murder of Politician's Son' 2010, *CBS News*, 24 July http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20011575-503543.html – Accessed 20 December 2011

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